

Few Aspects Regarding the Promotional Tools Used in the Marketing Activity of Publishing Houses

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Abstract

As they operate in an increasingly turbulent environment, modern organizations have to organize their activity in such a way that they meet the needs of their target audience as well, as quicker and as appropriate as possible, that they meet the consumers' demand and that they achieve a profitable and positively perceived existence. Alongside other categories of goods and services suppliers, publishing houses are organizations that operate in an intensely competitive market. Through their specifics, publishing houses target specific categories of audience, not only institutions and enterprises (such as: public and private libraries, educational institutions, other types of cultural institutions etc.), but also individuals. Consequently, publishing houses have to design, target and promote their offer so that they meet the demand for this specific type of cultural consumption in an appropriate manner. The purpose of this paper is to present the main techniques and tools used by publishing houses to implement communicational marketing activities.

Key words: publishing houses, marketing, communication, tools

J.E.L. classification: M31

1. Introduction

As they operate in a specific domain, publishing houses must adapt their activity based on the external environment trends: the lifestyle changes of young people, the increasing interest in career development, the increasing influence of new technologies in the everyday life of people, the emergence of new leisure and entertainment activities etc. Both young people and adults spend increasingly less time reading. Thus, the researches conducted in November 2015 by the specialists of the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training (Institutul National pentru Cercetare si Formare Culturala) on a data sample of 1067 people of ages over 14 show – between other important aspects, that: only 15% of the respondents read books on a daily basis, 3% read more than three hours a day, 21% read once or twice a year, 38% have never read a book, and 25% have not bought any book in the past year; however, 88% of the respondents said they watch television daily, and 65% watch television shows at least one hour a day. At the national data sample level, 38% buy books personally, from shops and only 7% on the Internet; the most important acquisition criterion is represented by the interest in the subject of the publication (59%), followed by the author's reputation (28%), having heard about the book (28%) and its price (23%). The reputation of the publishing house matters to only 6% of the respondents. Of the people who read daily, 31% live in the urban area, and 17% are women (Oană, 2015, pp. 60-109). Under these conditions, it is obvious that publishing houses must make special efforts to educate the public and to increase the interest of different categories of target audience in reading, on one hand, and to meet the people's demand of reading, on the other. Thus, they must create attractive offers for each category of readers, must adjust their prices in accordance with the financial possibilities of the readers, must select the appropriate channels to distribute their products and must use the most adequate methods

to increase the interest in reading, to communicate with the audience and to promote not only their own image, but also their offer.

2. Few Aspects Regarding the Marketing Activity of Publishing Houses in Romania

Based on the opinions expressed in the professional literature (Florescu, Malcomete and Pop, 2003, p.399; Moldoveanu and Ioan-Franc, 1997), it can be said that the publishing houses are suppliers of cultural products that offer cultural creations to audience, through specific distribution supports, such as books, magazines etc. Alongside these traditional means, nowadays publishing houses use other distribution supports, such as disks or CDs, and the technological development will create possibilities to use new distribution supports in the future.

Considering certain points of view, private organizations may operate in the socio-cultural area (education, health, culture); because of various reasons (mainly the lack of resources), they perform activities that serve a general specific interest and therefore they undergo a periodical administrative review. For this reason, they can be included among public services (Cetina, 2009, p. 228-229). Although most publishing houses are private economical organizations, with their own specific goals, there can also be publishing houses that are organized and operate under the aegis of public authorities.

Between other laws and settlements, Law rule 186/2003 (Legea 186/2003 in Romanian) regarding the support and promotion of written culture is one of the most important legal regulations concerning the publishing activity in Romania (A.E.R., 2015).

According to Article 1, paragraph 2, written culture refers to the area that includes books, magazines and other publications, with a literary-artistic, technical-scientific character, published on every kind of support. In addition to this, according to Article 4, in order to publish the publications mentioned in Article 1, the local and central public authorities, as well as the public institutions, can offer partial or full financial support, standalone or in partnerships. The law states the entities that can offer non-refundable funds to publishing houses in order to publish the publications mentioned in Article 1, and, moreover, in Article 15, it is stated that financial support can also be offered by professional organizations of publishers, distributors, creation unions to promote the production made under publishing houses.

The market of suppliers of cultural creations on written or virtual support has a wide coverage, even though, as shown by the results of the research previously mentioned within this paper, the audience's interest in reading is increasingly reduced, and the demand for this type of cultural consumption has diminished, the main competitors being the television and social media. However, publishing houses make continuous efforts to meet the needs of those who still want or still need to read, with higher profitability.

There are few statistical data regarding the books market size. Considering certain opinions, in 2013, 2014, the books market valued approximately 60 million euros (Chivu, 2016, Gamulescu, 2016, Ungureanu, 2014).

The main product offered by the publishing houses is the written book, with various thematic contents, such as: literature specialized in certain areas (belletristic, children literature, fiction etc.), school books, dictionaries, art, history, travelling, informatics, memoirs, essays, practical guides etc.), but the range of products can be much broader and can include magazines, e-books, CDs and DVDs, other distribution supports.

The editorial product is the result of a number of specific and complex processes (the acquisition of manuscripts, drafting and editing, page layout and graphics, typography etc.). It is offered at a price that should reward the efforts made to obtain, distribute and promote the product. When the main objective of the editorial activity is the profit, the price can be set so that under the market concrete conditions (demand, competition), it can cover the costs and earn profit. The prices can be differentiated based on the book's release date, author's reputation, paper quality and typographical reproduction, the collection type etc. However, if the publication has a social mission, message, the price is set so that the product is accessible to its target audience (and in most cases, as mentioned previously, public or private sources can also offer financial support).

An important aspect is the distribution of the editorial products. The distribution of books, mainly, but of the other editorial supports as well, can be direct, through the orders received by

publishing house, or indirect, through short or long channels. Even though many publishing houses have opened their own distribution networks, including online distribution platforms, distribution is considered a sensible aspect in publishing activities, because many bookshops have disappeared. Although various offline and online distribution networks are currently operating in the market (Compania de Librarii Bucuresti, Carturesti, librerie.net, piatadecarte.net etc.), book sale is an activity viewed as unprofitable by most entrepreneurs. However, there are digital publishing houses that provide publishing services and have distribution channels for digital books (Editura digitala, Editura virtuala etc.).

3. Marketing Communication Techniques and Tools Used in Publishing Houses' Activity in Romania

In order to achieve its goals and to perform efficiently, each publishing house must carefully set its marketing policies, in accordance with its own global policy.

Based on the market demands, publishing houses must plan a product policy that meets not only the social demand for written culture, but also the personal needs of the targeted readers. They must also develop a price policy in accordance with the characteristics of the products that are offered and with the financial possibilities of the different targeted groups. The publishing houses must also distribute these products so that they arrive in the most appropriate condition to the final reader, must inform the audience and must promote their offers using the most appropriate marketing communication techniques.

As the editorial product must satisfy a complex demand, generated by the social need for culture and the personal need of readers, there are certain situations and for well-stated purposes when the publishing houses' activity is supported by legal regulations, such as the Law rule 186 from 2003 (as previously shown in this paper). Thus, in order to promote the publications stated in the Article 1 from the Law rule, *Societatea Romana de Radiodifuziune (Romanian Broadcasting Company)*, as well as *Societatea Romana de Televiziune (Romanian Television Company)*, can offer at least 1% of the advertising space, with a 75% price reduction compared to the commercial advertising prices (Law rule 186/2003, art. 20(2), A.E.R., 2015).

So, in certain cases, the publishing houses may benefit from this support when they promote certain editorial products created and distributed for well-stated, social-educational purposes; however, besides this support, the publishing houses must promote their offer consistently and systematically, they must build, maintain and spread a positive image in the eyes of their target audience.

Realized through specific techniques, the activity of promotional and continuous marketing communication carried by the publishing houses allows them to start and maintain an open dialogue with the market, to send and receive messages, to convince the audience to purchase the editorial products, to build a positive image etc., thus contributing to achieving the marketing goals set. In this regard, during the process of developing and implementing the marketing strategy, the publishing houses can use techniques and tools through which they can achieve the goals set with more efficiency.

According to the marketing specialists' opinion (Armstrong and Kotler, 2015, p. 372-373), the major tools which assemble the promotional mix are: advertising, sales promotion, sales forces, public relations, and direct and digital marketing. To achieve their marketing communication goals, publishing houses can successfully use these promotional tools.

Thus, advertising is one of the most recommended methods of promotional communication with the target audience. Whether it is about using mass-media as an advertising support or about printed advertisements, direct advertising or other categories of supports, advertising is mainly used to inform readers about new editorial products or to promote certain events linked to the editorial activity (book fairs, book lectures, conferences etc.). The advertisements can be placed not only in the large interest press (national and regional daily newspapers, magazines aimed at a wider audience, with a wide variety of topics etc.), but also in the press specialized in broader cultural areas or literary area. The most popular tool for promoting the offer is the catalog; on one hand, it is used to inform the audience about the book offer, and on the other hand, if the recipients of the advertising endeavor are in fact the business partners, it is used to communicate the offer and in the

negotiation process. For publishing houses, sales promotion represents a way to promote their offer to both the readers and the business market. Some of the tools used are price reductions and special offers used on various occasions (especially during book fairs), events and seasons (winter holidays, beginning of school year, summer, by the seaside etc.), loyalty rewards or other types of rewards offered during certain events or unrelated to these, during integrated marketing communication campaigns, related to other promotional techniques (advertising, direct marketing, public relations, marketing events etc.). They may be granted exclusively by the publishing houses, but also in partnership with other entities and institutions in order to increase their visibility and to gain a positive image (printed press corporations and online press, radio stations and traditional and online television etc.). Especially during fairs, for the efforts made in promoting written culture, the rewards can be given not only to the audience, but also to the exhibitors, journalists, business partners and collaborators, educational institutes etc. (for instance, the raffle, rewards and prizes at the Gaudeamus International Fair) and can significantly contribute to an increase in sales. Marketing events represent by far one of the most popular promotion techniques used by publishing houses, aimed at both the readers and the business partners from the cultural area; these events include, among others, national and international book fairs and exhibitions (such as Frankfurt, Paris, Goteborg, Londra, Beijing, Cracovia etc.). Some of the most appreciated book fairs include: Gaudeamus (organized by *Radio Romania*, with projects on various topics: *Carte Scolara*, *Carte de Invatatura*), *Caravana Gaudeamus* etc.), Kilipirim (Book fair with discount), Bookfest (a book show with the international participation of various "Guests of Honor", organized by the Association of Romanian Publishers (Asociatia Editorilor din Romania)). Between the participants at these events are included: publishing houses of books, newspaper and magazines with literary sections and constant issue, sales agents and suppliers of editorial products, libraries, bookstores, literary agents, journalists, wide audience, thus offering the possibility to display the offer and to sale to the public, to negotiate and to conclude contracts with business partners. Through public relations, publishing houses communicate with different categories of public, with mass-media representatives, with decision makers from the cultural, social, educational areas, and they can promote their image in a specific way. They can organize special events or can be a part of them under various forms. A great impact on the cultural life is exerted by the workshops and conferences with the participation of guests such as: successful writers, awarded authors, literary critics, and actors with parts in plays published at those publishing houses (or even the playwrights themselves). The representatives of the publishing houses can discuss with journalists from specialized press or can send press releases. The publishing houses or theirs professional organizations can initiate events and can offer a totally or partially financial support for various events, such as, for example, the National Book Design Contest "*Cele mai frumoase carti*", the International Festival of Literature and Translation (FILIT-Iasi), "*Noaptea cartilor deschise*" (*The Night of Opened Books*) on *Humanitas Cismigiu Bookshop*, or other events (such as, for example, the human chain organized in Bucharest by the initiative of Litera Publishing House with the occasion of *World Book Day* and *Night of Opened Books*), the Campaign "*Te asteptam la librerie*" (initiated by the Herald Publishing House) etc. Big publishing houses such as: Humanitas, Nemira, Polirom, RAO etc., organize or patronize meetings with writers, reading nights (which can take place at various cultural institutions, clubs, educational institutions etc.) and also support social-humanitarian campaigns, under different forms.

Direct marketing is a communication mean through which publishing houses not only promote the offer, but also receive direct feedback from the public. Flyers and catalogs that offer the possibility of direct feedback from readers can be distributed by mail or can be offered through distribution networks or at specialized fairs; catalogs are also an important tool used in negotiations and for contracts. Nowadays, the Internet represents one of the main ways of sending promotional messages. Social networks, blogs, sites of publishing houses or of cultural publications etc., play a key role in promoting and commercializing the offer of the publishing houses. Mobile phones, Smart TVs, online magazines etc. are supports that allow not only the promotion of one's own offer, but also cross advertising. The development in technology will continue to lead to the emergence of new promotion tools and means, accessible to the new generations of users, raised in an era in which the communication takes place at an overwhelming pace and is limitless.

4. Conclusions

The promotion of editorial products is made through various marketing communication techniques and tools: advertisement (through mass-media, printings, external advertising etc.), sales promotion (special offers, price reductions for both individuals and institutions and enterprises etc.), marketing events (participating at fairs with special displays, where audio-visual demonstrations or meetings between writers and readers can take place), direct marketing (Internet sites, social media, messages sent over mobile phones networks etc.), through sales forces (aiming at a better incentive or motivation of sales agents and supplying firms), through public relations (press conferences, interviews, philanthropic events etc.) etc. Used properly, these techniques contribute (based on the chosen marketing and communication strategy) to the achievement of the communicational and marketing goals, in a strong relation with the goals of the publishing houses' general policy. These techniques can generate even more success: if they are used in integrated marketing communication campaigns, their effect is multiplied through mutual support.

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